



# INTERPRETING URBAN OPEN SPACES AS AN ART OBJECT: TRABZON PAZARKAPI ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN PROJECTS

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## ABSTRACT

Art begins with perception and transforms into a space setup. We sense space not to the extent that we see, but as far as we perceive it. The relationship of art with space can exhibit multi-layered and variable results. The void in the space gets through different processes until it is limited and defined by the work of art. The space turns into a "place" through the existence of a work of art in a space. When the field of experience is combined with art, it is qualified as a "place" rather than a void. Transforming urban open spaces into "places" should be one of the primary purpose of designers, and its relationship with art should also be addressed during this process. The urban open space design process can be examined in different manners in terms of the relationship between landscape and art. Different uses of open spaces and differentiating art concepts are some of these perspectives. The most current one among these different perspectives is the phenomenon of 'space as an art object'. It is aimed to reveal the designer's part in establishing the relationship of art with urban open spaces, in this study. The process of the Environmental Design Project Class 6 provided by the Department of Landscape Architecture at Karadeniz Technical University (KTU) and students' design of Pazarkapi performed during the said process were examined in terms of art. As a result, it was determined that the environmental design projects examined considered open spaces as art objects and designed original covering elements, water elements, amphi theaters, flooring and furnitures as art objects in accordance with the concepts they determined.

**Keywords:** Urban space, Landscape Architecture, art, environmental design

## KENTSEL AÇIK MEKANLARI SANAT NESNESİ OLARAK YORUMLAMAK: TRABZON PAZARKAPI ÇEVRE TASARIM PROJELERİ

### ÖZET

Sanat algıyla başlar ve bir mekân kurgusuna dönüşür. Gördüğümüz ölçüde değil, algıladığımız kadarıyla mekânı duyumsarız. Sanatın mekânla kurduğu ilişki, çok katmanlı ve değişken sonuçlar sergileyebilir. Mekândaki boşluk sanat yapıtı tarafından sınırlandırılıp tanımlanıncaya kadar farklı süreçlerden geçer. Sanat yapıtının bir mekânda var oluşuyla mekân "yer"e dönüşür. Deneyim alanı sanatla birleştiğinde artık bir boşluktan öte "yer" olma özelliği taşır. Kentsel açık mekânları da "yer" e dönüştürme tasarımcıların öncelikli amaçlarından olmalı, bu süreçte sanatla olan ilişkisi de ele alınmalıdır. Kentsel açık mekân tasarım süreci, peyzaj - sanat ilişkisi açısından farklı şekillerde incelenebilir. Farklı açık mekân kullanımları ve farklılaşan sanat anlayışları bu açılardan bazılarıdır. Bu farklı bakış açılarından en güncel olanı, 'bir sanat nesnesi olarak mekân' olgusudur. Bu çalışmada; kentsel açık mekânlarla sanatın ilişkilerinin kurulmasında, tasarımcıya düşen görevlerin ortaya çıkarılması hedeflenmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi Peyzaj Mimarlığı Bölümü Çevre Tasarım Proje 6 Dersi süreci ve bu süreçte yapılan Pazarkapi



öğrenci tasarımları sanatsal açıdan irdelenmiştir. Sonuçta incelenen çevre tasarım projelerinin belirledikleri konseptlere uygun olarak açık mekânları sanat objesi olarak ele aldıkları, sanat nesnesi olarak özgün örtü elemanları, su elemanları, amfiler, döşeme ve donatılar tasarladıkları belirlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kentsel mekân, peyzaj mimarlığı, sanat, çevre tasarımı

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Space is defined as "the void that separates human being from the environment to a certain extent and is available for sustaining his actions." "Establishing an architectural space is to limit a part of the broad nature or landscape space that people can apprehend"(Hasol, 2005). According to Şengül Öymen Gür, space is "the place of a person or a group in its simplest definition". Space is a void in which human beings, human relations and the equipment required by these relationships exist, the boundaries of which are determined according to the structure and character of the organization it encompasses (Gür,1996). The space void is a distinctive element because it is the expression of the most real life values. Living entity is moving. Movement can only be in space (Kuban,2002). Norberg-Schultz's definition also supports Kuban by adding the perceptual dimension. The three-dimensional organization of the elements that constitute a place shows the structure of the space (Norberg-Schultz, 1980). Despite the abstraction of the concept of space, the object transforms into a place by reaching significance with its positioning in space and creates a concrete area. This area offers new experience opportunities for both the artist and the audience. Art object both fills the void and shapes it through its existence and positioning in space (Baydar, 2017; Ertekin and Çorbacı, 2018). In this context, art objects transform the space itself into an art object, thus a "place", by creating personal experience and a memory with respect to the experience through their positioning in the space, the traces they leave, and their temporary positioning. These objects can be urban equipment elements specific to the open space and when they are considered as art objects, they can add the spirit of the place to the space.

The object of art forms an area of exchange by entering into an indirect and direct relationship with the space. In other words, "while the object establishes a new bond with the space, the space attributes a meaning to the object, and the object attributes a meaning to the space"(Bulduk, 2007). While the object is perceived through space, forms and void complement each other. With the existence of the object, the space becomes limited and vice versa. Daniel Buren also emphasizes the importance of the physical and formal environment in the perception of the art object (Buren, 2000). Works of art and activities of art, which have taken place in urban open spaces since ancient times, bear the characteristics that leave a trace in people's memory as an element of space arrangement, known as specific reference points and create aesthetic pleasure. However, today, as a result of rapid urbanization and the impact of technology on lifestyles and tastes, the spatial structure is changing; contemporary urban approach ignores the cultural identity and historical values of cities and the characteristics having regional meaning (Düzenli et al., 2017). Today, art objects-urban equipment are considered as a part of urban design in order to beautify cities and to attribute a memory and identity to the city within the urban open space arrangements. The recurring thought in many research conducted today is that the urban life experience and the use of space play an important role in the dynamics of social life dynamics. The artistic approach and work of art constitute a very significant part of the space design in urban open space arrangements. Because in addition to the



functional meaning of the urban space, the symbolic meaning established in terms of history and society determines the identity and image created in our minds with the formation of a memory about the city. Moreover, it creates an aesthetic pleasure. The image of the space created in our minds has a direct impact on our behavior, in other words, on the use of space. This indicates the significance of space organization and image in our lives when the interaction with the environment is concerned (Başak Varol, 2004). When the urban open space design process is examined in terms of the relationship between landscape and art, different possibilities are encountered. These emerge in parallel with the changing approaches of art, open space usage and the development of landscape architecture in the historical process. Today, among these relations, it is observed that the phenomenon of "space as an art object" gains prominence. The aim of this study is to examine the environmental design projects established with a perspective that helps urban open spaces transform into "places" by designing them as art objects.

## **2. THE RELATIONSHIP OF ART-URBAN OPEN SPACE**

The art movements with respect to environmental design start from beginning of humankind and the formation of urbanization consciousness through the first settlements, and continue with the emergence of the requirement for open space in urban areas that have become crowded with the industrial revolution. The formation of urban open spaces has been actualized and is being actualized by the influence of artistic approaches as well as by the influence of the social, ideological and political views, order of the day of the period and in which it existed (Erdönmez and Ünlü, 2009). While addressing urban open spaces in terms of art, it is necessary to examine the landscape elements and art objects as well as the urban equipment (floor covering, coating, seating element, table, panel, separators, etc.) available in the space.

Urban open spaces are communal areas open to entire members of the society, where people communicate by seeing each other and using the shared environment and shape the urban organization with their spatial arrangement features. While these communal areas lay a shared platform for discussion and understanding of issues that concern everyone in the society by providing an environment for social communication between individuals with others; they enable us to become aware of our interest in the environment psychologically, to understand the private-public balance and the formation of urban consciousness, cultural identity and social values. When the open space arrangements that are considered attractive and successful where people gather are examined, it is observed that these organizations ensure the order that will enable the understanding and comprehension of the whole since the components and elements of the space contain the diversity that they will offer to different cultures and lifestyles (Varol, 2004). As the orientation of art from interior to exterior becomes widespread, as it moves out of the houses, museums, galleries, its dimensions in the city also change. Recently, art institutions, galleries and museums have become concepts far from being open to the public, due to losing of their former significance as being the architectural order and cultural representation. Therefore, the artists of today do not hesitate to present the innovations made in the art world in public spaces and thus the open space turns into an arena of representation. In this context, art taking place in the urban area is no longer just the object that the audience stands and examines, it appears before us with the diversity of functions and participants, and spatial organizations in different parts of the city.



Therefore, it is necessary to address the products for human use such as urban equipment and urban furniture in an aesthetic approach within this context. One of the most important examples of this is Battery Park in New York. The spatial elements such as such as billboards, traffic lights, benches, bus stops and guideboards in this park are considered as art objects with aesthetic characteristics. In urban open spaces, the designer-artist can contribute to these creations by providing space-equipment integrity (Ögel, 1977).

The environment has an incredibly significant impact on human psychology. The creation of urban space formations depends on space formations that have visual effect and leave a mark in the memory. There is a strong relation between the formation of these social spaces and urban identity. Urban open spaces directly contribute to historical continuity, urban identity and the formation of urban consciousness. At the same time, according to the followers of Gestalt, the integrity and efficiency of the space, in other words, the space-equipment relationship, also creates an aesthetic attitude (Haseş, 1994).

The works of art and activities taking place in urban space arrangements increase the quality of the environment by shaping the political and social life and ensuring its change through communication, as well as making it beautiful in open space arrangements. In this context, we can say that the relationship between the art object and the space within the urban open space arrangements also affects the taste. Urban art means art that is performed in public places, in front of everyone. The difference of open space art from the traditional exhibition activity in galleries and museums is that the work of art reaches its audience directly in the daily urban life. Urban open space art is the art performed where it can easily be seen and accessible by the public and generally performed in public open spaces (Hayden, 1995). Usually, the thoughts such as criticism and warnings with respect to the environment and culture we live in, the manner people communicate with each other, considering ourselves and our environment through a new consciousness, and becoming aware of our own actions and reactions, constitute the essence of such art activities (Akdeniz, 1988). Arlene Raven (1989) also defined public art as a phenomenon that includes more than the equestrian we are used to seeing in urban squares. The reason for this is not only to the change in artistic practice, but also to the change in urban living conditions. These conditions include the concepts of personal behavior mechanisms such as privacy belonging to the society and the continuity of cultural values such as social communication, and the phenomenon for the protection of identity, in other words, the power of the social constituents. The phenomenon of art in urban open spaces is inseparable from urban life. Ideally, art should have an integral feature by creating a peaceful environment in resolving the conflicts that society falls into (Mitchell, 1992). Today, establishing a "communication" between the artistic and socio-political areas of a city in the midst of a search for a new and different area for the realization of art activity has become an important issue. Today's art progresses with the relationship it establishes with its audience and the social dialogue and dynamics it creates (Rosa, 2002). Usually, the issue of not comprehending the art object has been linked with its location in the museum or to the inadequacy of the audience's consciousness with respect to art. At this point, urban open space art draws become prominent in the gap between the audience and art. This makes work of art a part of everyday life by presenting them in the public spaces to the reluctant audience who does not come to galleries and museums (Jacob, 1995). Today, art organizations are established to beautify urban spaces, emphasize their identity, revitalize and make them more functional. These events, which



are actualized with the participation of local artists and local people, are also supported by the municipalities. Through the efforts of making the urban environment more livable and positive, it is aimed to create the environmental- mental- cultural environment that society requirements in addition to improving the physical conditions (Akdeniz, 1988). In summary, the main purpose of the art performed in the urban open space is to create a meaning by activating objects and events in an aesthetic manner in the urban space (Remesar, 2001). Therefore, art in urban open spaces is the art that engages with all components of the space, including its users. The aim of this study is to shed light on the process of art transforming space into place by examining urban open space designs from aspects such as the relationship of equipment-space, design-art dimension within the scope of the Environmental Design Project Class 6 provided by the Department of Landscape Architecture at Karadeniz Technical University.

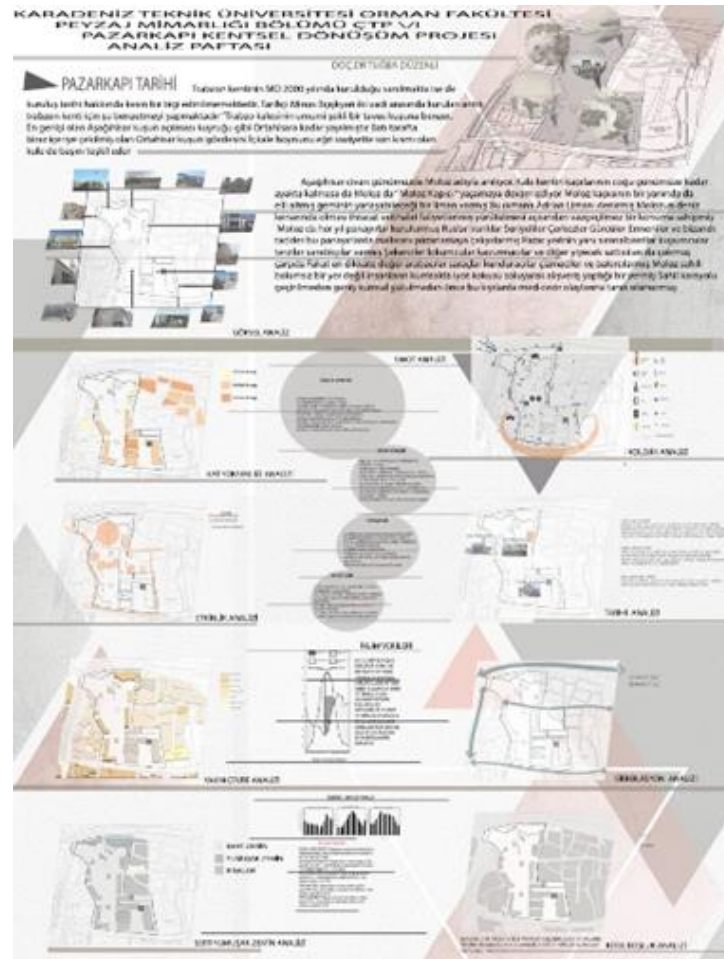
### 3. WORKSHOP PROCESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN PROJECT 6

Courses of the fall semester within the scope of the academic year of 2020-2021 at KTU were conducted through distance education within the framework of the decisions taken under the coordination of YÖK (Council of Higher Education) due to the Covid-19 global epidemic. The subject title of the Environmental Design Project 6 (ÇTP 6) course in the 2020-2021 Fall Semester has been determined as "Reproduction of the Public Space", where the reflections of Covid-19 on social life will be addressed. As the study area, the Municipality and District Governorship Building as well as its close surroundings referred to as Pazarkapı in Ortahisar district of Trabzon province (Figure 1), were assigned to the students and they were asked to design creatively, authentically and artistically in a manner that "transforms the space into a place" within the integrity of "Public Space and Social Distance" in a manner to satisfy the requirements of people reshaped with the change of daily life.

**Figure 1:** Maps of study area



The main objective of the project is to design an urban courtyard that will serve the city of Trabzon and its close surroundings and to produce spatial solutions that allow the activities required in this area. The designer-student is asked to come up with design ideas that aim to attribute an identity to the city and that are suitable for the improvement and effective use of the area, that turn the project area into a more vibrant and alive part of the city and that transform the space into a place by integrating art and space.

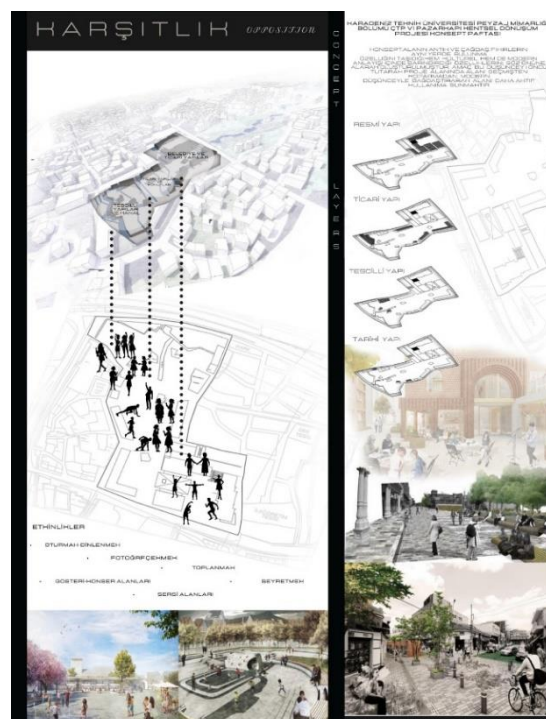
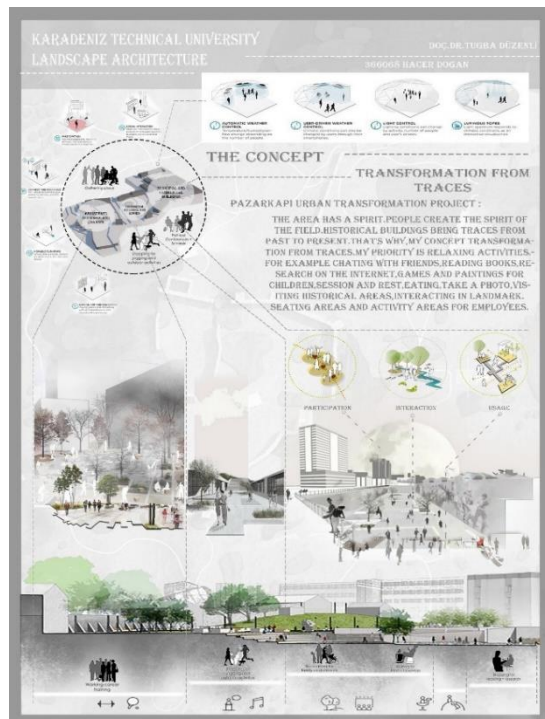
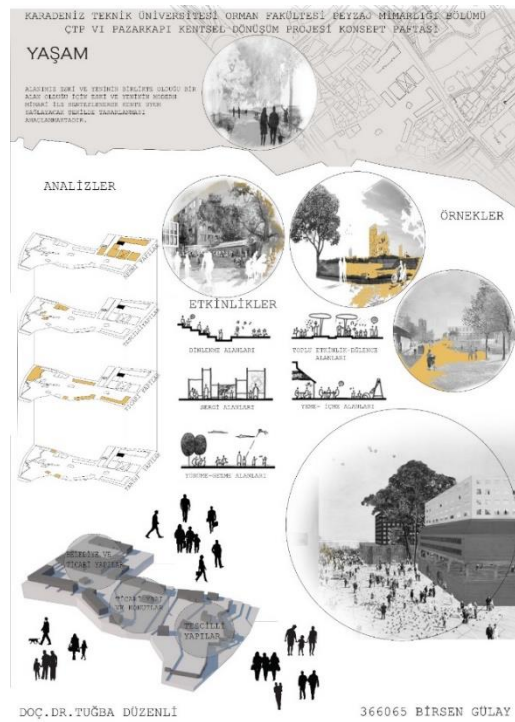


**Figure 2: Survey sheet**

The designs should have functional, aesthetic and artistic value in accordance with the principles of landscape architecture, in a manner that will serve different user groups using the city and satisfy their requirements and demands. In the landscape design to be carried out for this purpose, creative and various uses are expected that will bring functionality to this area in the best way and transform the space into an art object. A work schedule, with a time period of 16 weeks, was created and the process was carried out in a virtual classroom environment through distance education in line with the above-mentioned expectations. The survey data were obtained primarily during the project process; and then the concept relations were revealed with the requirement program created as a result of these analysis (Figure 2, Table 1).



**Table 1.** Samples of Concept Sheets





In the concept sheets, the conceptual design is presented by considering the originality and creativity of the design, theme/ concept, spatial organization and functional organization. Minimalism, life, innovation, contrast, transformation, cultural zone, historical texture, paradise garden, past/ future, reflection, time tunnel were the concepts students chose. When determining entire concepts, the characteristics of the area were considered. In the next stage, options-sketches were produced depending on the activities determined in the concepts, and the final design was started according to the selected sketch. In the next section, the final designs will be examined in terms of being an urban open space-art object relationship.

#### 4. EXAMINING PROJECTS AS OBJECTS OF ART

At this stage, 3 projects completed by the students were selected and the processes of transformation of the space into an art object were examined in terms of open space designs, equipment, activities, and concepts. The first design belongs to Sena Acar (Table 2,3). The concept in this project has been chosen as "Minimalism". By streets, focus and circulation are examined in the synthesis stage and schematized with a minimalist approach. The adjectives of simplicity, harmony, comfort, innovation, aesthetics, clarity, modernity, modernism, and stability have been determined under the title of minimalism in the concept diagram. The activities such as eating and drinking, recreation, trekking, waiting, touring, exhibitions, taking photographs, reading books, stage performances, and watching movies are listed based on this diagram. Then, sketches were produced according to the survey, area analysis, concept, synthesis, activity scheme and the final design was achieved. In the design, plain broken lines were preferred in accordance with the concept of minimalism in terms of form, and the emphasis of the square was tried to be achieved with formal broken expressions on a linear flooring on the floor. The original cover element, artistic water elements with broken lines and a grass amphitheater going down to the lower elevations were designed as an art object in the part of the study area considered as a square. This section forms the focus of the design. Moreover, billboards and open-air exhibitions in front of official public buildings were designed and these equipment were transformed into art objects. One of the existing buildings in the area was transformed into a theater by attributing a function and the seating equipment around was designed artistically.

The second design belongs to Hacer Doğan (Table 4,5). In this project, the concept was chosen as "Transformation from Traces" due to the historical traces in the area. Focus, activity areas and circulation were examined in the synthesis stage and schematized with a transformational approach. The adjectives of focus, interaction, comfortable, availability, search, difference, change, center have been determined under the title of transformation in the concept diagram. Activities of eating and drinking, recreation, trekking, waiting, touring, exhibitions, sports, art activities, show and watching activities are listed based on this diagram. Afterwards, sketches were produced according to the survey, area analysis, concept, synthesis, activity scheme and the final design was achieved. In the design process, two different lines were preferred in accordance with the concept of transformation from the trace in terms of form, radial linear lines and circular lines were built together. The emphasis of the square was tried to be achieved with circular expressions on a radial linear flooring on the ground. An original art element with broken asymmetrical lines as an art object in the section of the



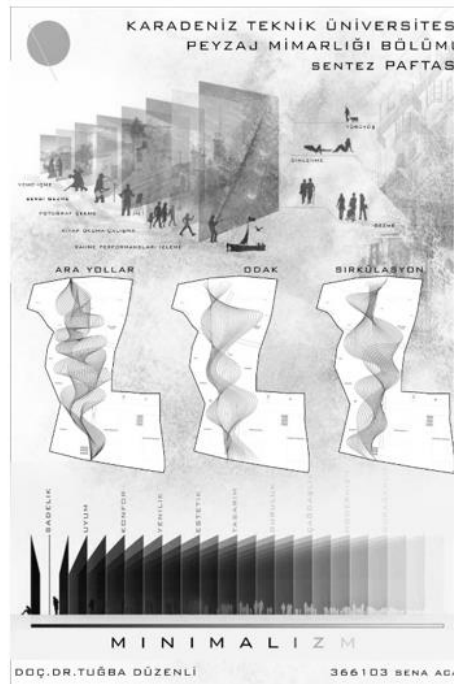
study area considered as a square was designed as an urban focus by lighting and creating a continuous water element around it. In this section, people can reach this object on the grass and perform different activities around it. Moreover, the waiting-seating equipment located in front of official public buildings has also been transformed into art objects. An original building in the area was artistically designed as a museum. Entire building facades are also coated as art objects.

The third design belongs to Ebru Odacı (Table 6,7). In this project, the concept was chosen as "Reflection" due to the reflections of the area from past to present. Buildings, green areas, activity areas, user profiles and circulation were examined during the synthesis stage and schematized in context from past to present. In the concept diagram, the adjectives of traditional, future, past, culture, peace, life, social, history, perception are determined under the title of reflection. The activities such as eating and drinking, recreation, trekking, watching, waiting, touring, watching movies are listed based on this diagram. Then, sketches were produced according to the survey, area analysis, concept, synthesis, activity scheme and the final design was achieved. In the design, two different lines are preferred in accordance with the concept of reflecting the past to the present in terms of form, and the radial linear lines and organic lines are built together. The emphasis of the square was tried to be achieved with a large organic form on a radial linear flooring on the ground. A large asymmetrical and organic circle in the section of the study area considered as a square, a cover with vegetation on it is also designed as a multi-functional artistic focus as a road-viewing terrace in the air. In this section, people can walk on the path under this object on the grass area, perform different activities around it. Those who would like to, can also watch the view by climbing on it. Moreover, waiting-seating equipment in front of official public buildings has also been transformed into art objects. An original open-air cinema has also been designed in the area; artistic kiosks are also placed around it. Entire building facades are also coated as art objects.



**Table 2. Design Process of Sena Acar**  
**CONCEPT: MINIMALISM**

SYNTHESIS SHEET



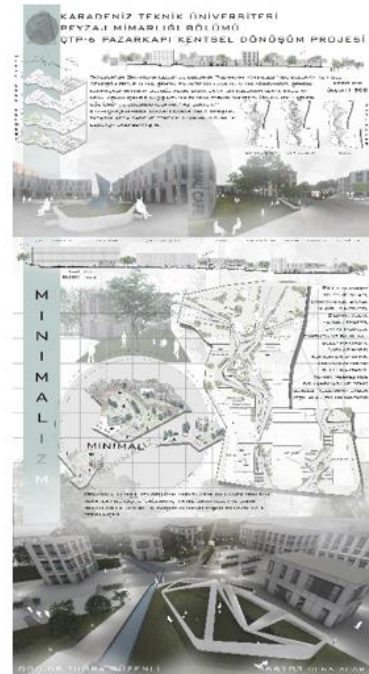
FINAL DESIGN



DETAIL SHEET



DELIVERY SHEET





**Table 3.** Art Objects of the Project by Sena Acar



It is aimed to transform the space into a place by considering the square part of the project as an object of art. In this section, the green area has been transformed into grass amphitheater descending to the lower floor with water elements having broken artistic lines around it and original seating equipment and lighting are used in front of them. It is aimed to create an artistic courtyard and square between the buildings.



The most artistic object in the square was the creative, sculptural covering element with broken lines placed on the grass amphitheater.



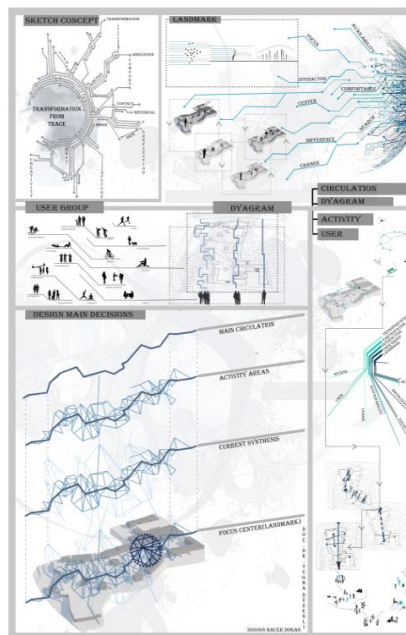
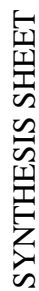
The facade of the building, which has the function of theater, is artistically designed, and the seating equipment and panels in the front have been transformed into art objects. Seating equipment are sculptural art objects that fluctuate with organic lines.



An open-air exhibition area was designed in front of the public buildings, and the exhibition panels here are considered as sculptural art objects with broken lines.

**Table 4.** Design Process of Hacer Doğan

### CONCEPT: TRANSFORMATION FROM TRACES

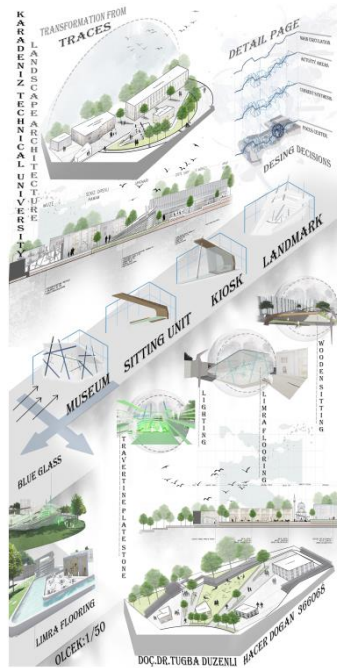


## FINAL DESIGN





DETAIL SHEET



DELIVERY SHEET

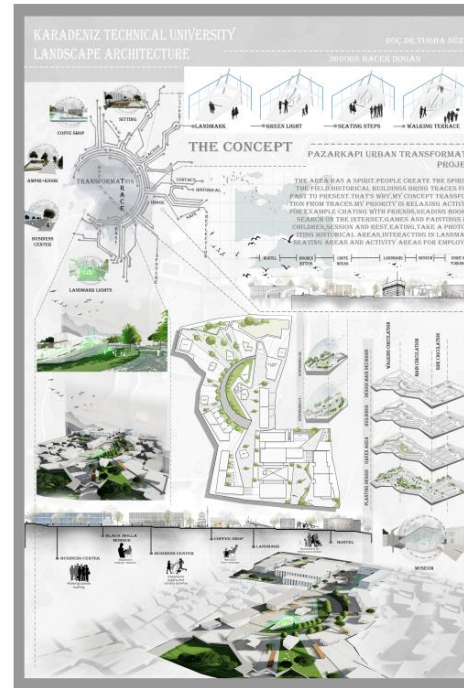
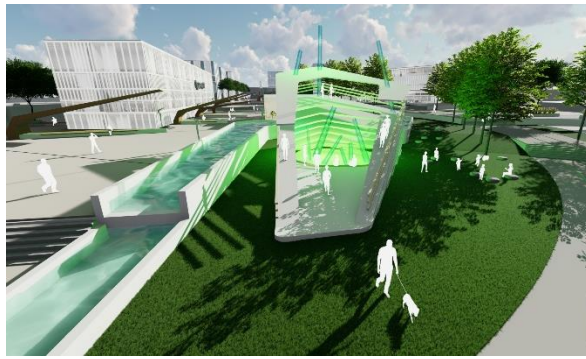


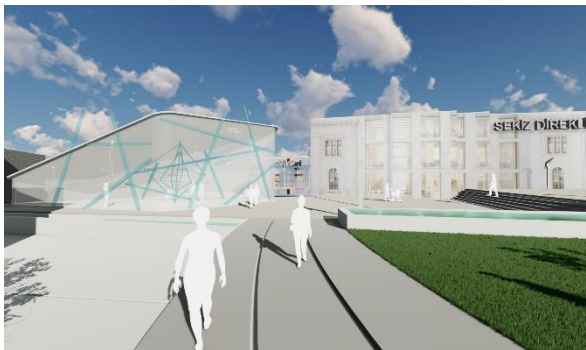
Table 5. Art Objects of the Project by Hacer Doğan



It is aimed to transform the space into a place by considering the square part of the project as an object of art. In this section, a center with circular line was designed and an artistic focus illuminated on the green area, water elements with broken artistic lines around it, original seating equipment were used in front of them. It is aimed to create a courtyard and a square that creates an artistic focus between the buildings.



The most artistic object in the square was the illuminated design element placed on the grass floor with broken lines that is creative and also serves as a sculpture.



An artistic building, intended to be used as a museum, was also designed, and the seating equipment in the front section and the building facade were designed as art objects. The building has become an art object with linear asymmetrical lines.



An open-air waiting area was designed in front of the public buildings, and the seating equipment here was considered as art objects where the sculptural cover with broken lines, grass and wood came together.



**Table 6.** Design Process of Ebru Odacı  
**CONCEPT: REFLECTION**

SYNTHESIS SHEET



FINAL DESIGN



DETAIL SHEET



DELIVERY SHEET



**Table 7.** Art Objects of the Project by Ebru Odacı

it is aimed to transform the space into a place by considering the square part of the project as an object of art. In this section, the center, which has both a cover and a terrace function rising towards the air with a circular line, was designed and an artistic focus was used on the green area and recreation places with broken artistic lines around them as well as original seating equipment are used in front of them. It is aimed to create a courtyard and a square that creates an artistic focus between the buildings.



The most artistic object in the square was the creative, sculptural covering element with circular organic lines placed on the grass floor and the radial water elements around it.



An artistic open-air cinema has also been designed in the area, and the seating equipment and kiosks in the front are designed as art objects.



An open-air waiting area was designed at the front of the public buildings, and the seating equipment here was considered as art objects where sculptural covering with broken lines and wood combined.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The space can be interpreted as a whole with the boundaries defined, formed by the objects and inter- objects void. This interpretation points out that the space is not only formed by fullness, but also that the void is a significant part of this formation. Space is a phenomenon in which objects can be placed side by side, moved, perceived at the same time, or observed successively. Space is a concept that has continuity, it is perceived as it moves within its boundaries, not at once. In this context, space should be both limited and unlimited. The elements that constitute the space not only perform physical functions but also organize the human-space relationship. The position of these elements in the space will affect the relationship of other elements in the space with each other and with the human beings, and will attribute them a positive or negative meaning (Petitot, 2004). The relationship between art and space emphasizes the concept of settlement in space (Massey, 1993). The size of the object, the compatibility or contradiction of the angles of the perceived shapes, how risky or decisive the positions of its units are, and all other characteristics are positioned in accordance with the body and eyes of the audience that are constantly moving (Smith, 2006). The position of the art object in the space is also significant in addition to the compatibility of the space for the object. The relationship of the space with other objects in the space, its relationship with elements such as walls, floors, floors and stairs, such as entrance and exit, also requires a complex planning process that includes the circulation of the space audience, beyond being an artistic or visual choice (Alpak et al., 2019; Güler, 2014; Tarakçı et al., 2018). Therefore, the space should be considered as an object of art and designed with this perspective. Not only how the object of art is accommodated in the space, but also how it controls the space and its environment, what kind of relationship it envisages with the audience both physically and cognitively, and how it develops this relationship is also important. In this market, the process and the results of the Environmental Design Project 6 Course of the KTU Landscape Architecture Department, which is addressed from this perspective, was examined. As a result, designs started with different concepts such as minimalism, transformation, reflection, and innovation. In each project, open spaces are considered as art objects. The part of the projects, which is generally considered as a square, was designed as an art object with original covering elements, water elements, amphi theaters, sculptures, flooring and artistic seating units. In some studies, artistic functions were added to the existing buildings in the area and turned into a theater-museum.



Urban open spaces produced with an artistic approach can help cultures and societies to become more humane, civilized societies and cultures that incorporate concepts such as life, art, nature, and city in a dialectical relationship by providing physical and imaginary spaces that individuals and society require. Therefore, art objects in urban open space arrangements should be addressed as a part of urban design with a holistic perspective, both to beautify cities and establish a memory and attribute an identity to the city.

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